



Communist University Introductions

These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.

Education, Part 5



Peter McLaren and Gustavo Fischman

Organic Intellectuals

The attached item today, in this fifth part of our current course, has the long title: *“Rethinking Critical Pedagogy and the Gramscian and Freirean Legacies: From Organic to Committed Intellectuals or Critical Pedagogy, Commitment, and Praxis”*. It is by Gustavo Fischman and [Peter McLaren](#), who are present-day exponents of [Critical Pedagogy](#), or in other words the educational method of Paulo Friere. The title immediately starts to grapple with “the notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals”.

If you had a method of educating the masses, what else would you need in the way of revolution? Is there any difference between politics and political education?

Or is it a trinity that is at the same time a unity, namely: Educate, Organise, Mobilise?

Paulo Freire concentrated his intellectual fire on the single most practical priority, which at the same time requires the deepest philosophical clarity: the education of the existing masses. He called it **“The Pedagogy of the Oppressed”**.

Fischman and McLaren make clear, by reference to Gramsci, that such a Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a direct form of class struggle. It is a direct confrontation with the interests of the bourgeois state. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed is an open contradiction of the bourgeois class dictatorship as applied through state-led education, as well as through the instructive function of the judiciary.

The authors note that Gramsci is often misappropriated ([see also CU](#)). They write:

“Because Gramsci identified civil society as an arena used by the ruling class to exert its hegemony over the society, the struggle for Gramsci was not to transform civil society but rather, as Holst points out, ‘to build proletarian hegemony’.”

That is to say: proletarian ascendancy, also known as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Fischman and McLaren are rejecting the view of “hegemony” as a “Third Way” that could by-pass revolutionary confrontation. Revolution cannot be by-passed. It is an unavoidable necessity.

After discussing Gramsci’s organic intellectuals they quote Gramsci as follows:

“Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the construction of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of ‘specialized’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.”

Fischman and McLaren go on to argue for the “committed intellectual”, with “an unwavering commitment to the struggle against injustice”.

These words aptly describe the revolutionary teachers necessary to a revolutionary society. They can as well be understood as describing a cadre force of communists: a Communist Party.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Organic Intellectuals, 2005, McLaren and Fischman](#).

UMSEBENZI ONLINE

South African Education Crisis

Writing for the SACP's Umsebenzi Online, in August 2012, and seeing a deep crisis, the distinguished South African History Professor, Jeff Guy, began as follows:

"We are confronted by it daily: the failure of education at every level: attempts to remove the stifling legacy of our educational past brought to nothing by inflexible pedagogies, inadequate teaching, stifling bureaucracy, and inefficient administration all contributing to the waste of the funds and material upon which young peoples' futures depend. In the press, at conferences and workshops, this contemporary crisis is in the public view. Open comment and criticism of this kind are essential attributes of the democratic approach, and will lead, one has to hope, in the direction of radical improvement. But in the past fortnight I have been confronted by another dimension of the crisis in education. While it might appear to be very different I believe it is one that also has its roots in our history, and is as difficult to solve."

By writing in the Business Day, Professor Guy had suddenly become exposed to a furious, vindictive barrage of Philistine commentary, the nature of which he describes as: *"ignorance of the great themes in modern history - that is, of the world that has made us and we have made."*

He goes on: *"the reaction to my article has persuaded me that the crisis concerns not just the educationally disadvantaged, but the advantaged as well."*

Two things come to mind at once.

First is the confirmation that a general elevation of the educational level of the entire society needs to be contrived, whether in the manner of N F S Grundtvig and the Danish folk-high-schools, or in the manner of the committed intellectuals described by McLaren and Fischman, or in some other way, such as the political education programme envisaged in the "South African Road to Socialism" passed at the 13th SACP Congress in Ongoye a month earlier than Guy's article, in July 2012.

Second is the apparent fact that in the utilitarian rush to “*improve maths, science and technology*”, as President Zuma put it in his State of the Nation Address on 14 February 2013, history has been relegated in schools to the status of an optional subject, of no worth. President Zuma did not even mention history. This is what he said:

“We welcome the improvement each year in the ANA results, but more must be done to improve maths, science and technology.”

“The Department of Basic Education will establish a national task team to strengthen the implementation of the Mathematics, Science and Technology Strategy.”

“We urge the private sector to partner government through establishing, adopting or sponsoring maths and science academies or Saturday schools.”

So, far from repairing what Professor Guy described as “*ignorance of the great themes in modern history - that is, of the world that has made us and we have made,*” the actual prospect is of even deeper ignorance because of lack of incentive and because of the time being crowded out by the ostensibly market-sanctified trio of “*maths, science and technology*”.

Professor Guy passed away in December, 2014.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Crisis in South African Education, Jeff Guy, Umsebenzi Online, 2012.](#)

Education, Part 5b



Educate to Liberate

“Essential service” is a technical term in labour relations and in the SA Constitution, whereby a designated type of worker can be forbidden by law from striking. When, in early 2013, the Secretary-General of the ANC proposed that education be made an “essential service”, this was immediately, loudly and very successfully opposed by the teachers’ union, SADTU.

The matter ended with the unequivocal statement by the President of the ANC and the Republic, Jacob Zuma, as part of the 2013 State of the Nation Address, that teaching would not be made an “essential service” in this sense, and that teachers would continue to have the same rights as other workers, including the right to strike.

The communist party, the SACP, had used the occasion to issue a press release that said that debating the loaded phrase “essential service” was a waste of time for all, but that there is a necessary debate to be had about the nature and purpose of education. The SACP statement says:

*“The SACP is further of the view that we should not just provide an education that produces readily made goods for absorption by the labour market but that our education, an education that must be essential, must be underpinned by the vision of **People’s Education for People’s Power!** This vision requires that our schooling and post schooling education systems do not just produce skilled individuals but individuals who are able to interpret and make sense of their political, ideological and socio-economic conditions and thus be actors to radically alter those conditions.”*

One month earlier, the well-respected educationalist Michael Rice, in an article prominently published by the Johannesburg newspaper, The Star, used the occasion of the announcement of the Matric examination results to argue:

“Our obsession with exam results has devalued education to little more than a means of obtaining a certificate to gain entrance to some sort of professional training or a job. The cultivation of values, critical thought, cultural sensitivity and the wide spectrum of opportunities for personal, intellectual and moral development have become irrelevant in the pursuit of marks.”

“What is needed is a complete revisioning of education; what it is, what it is meant for, who it is meant to serve and how, and how to assess its worth.

The abolition of the present public exam system would go a long way to making such a paradigm shift possible.”

Later on, Dr Rice says:

“Sticking with the present system is not an option.”

These two documents, the SACP press release and Dr Rice’s article from the Star, are reproduced in full in the attached file. Like the preceding item (the article by Prof Jeff Guy) these documents stand as evidence that that leading forces in society recognise that the very nature of education is currently at issue.

In the same State of the Nation Address of 14 February, 2013, President Zuma also said:

“We welcome the improvement each year in the ANA results, but more must be done to improve maths, science and technology.

“The Department of Basic Education will establish a national task team to strengthen the implementation of the Mathematics, Science and Technology Strategy.”

Dr Rice points out:

“Our present system was created to meet the needs of the first industrial revolution in the 19th century. It is demonstrably failing to meet the needs of the 21st century... Mass public education was first introduced in Prussia and later the rest of Europe to meet the needs of industrial competitiveness.”

In fact, mass public education has historically been a bourgeois, capitalist policy, designed to cheapen the cost, and therefore the market price, of commodity labour power. As much as you may think that you are getting educated for higher wages, in the scheme of the bourgeois, the intention is to lower your wages.

Whenever the mass education system tends towards what N F S Grundtvig called “education for life”, the collective bourgeoisie becomes restless and begins to agitate.

The bourgeois agitation for science is not for true science, which is a humanity and which is inseparable from philosophy. Their agitation for technology is narrow. Their agitation for mathematics is for “mathematics literacy” (“Maths

Lit.”), which is intended to remove all intellectual content and leave only the barest and most impoverished kind of utility.

These measures are a reversion to something akin to the “Bantu Education” of old.

Above all, the South African bourgeoisie wants history taken out of schools, and politics taken out of the heads and out of the mouths of school teachers. Our purpose in this course is to frustrate that bourgeoisie, to restore history, to revive People’s Education for People’s Power, and bring back Education for Liberation from the Philistine, anti-human bourgeoisie.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Educate to Liberate – SACP; Abolish Matric - Dr Michael Rice; 2013.](#)

Education, Part 5c



Meeting of Doctors in the [Medieval University](#) of Paris

Education and State Power

From the time of the origins of the modern Universities about nine hundred years ago in Medieval Europe, a Doctor has been a person who has a licence to teach. At the beginning, the universal (Catholic) Church awarded the doctorates. Later, the universities became more autonomous, but at the same time more clearly part of the State, integrated with its bureaucracy, and inseparable from it in class terms. Napoleonic France codified the matter in 1808 by instituting the *doctorat d'État* (Doctorate of the State) as a monopoly.

Today, in South Africa, there is state control over education, and the Minister of Higher Education and Training is a communist, Doctor Blade Nzimande, who is also the General Secretary of the SACP.

The Communist University, however, is outside of this fold, unrecognised, and unsupported. It is a “school for life” in the sense of that term used by N F S Grundtvig and the Danish folk-high-schools. The CU requires no entry qualification, and it awards no certificates or degrees. It has no recognised Doctors. Yet it is certainly an institution of higher learning, where Marxism, the modern humanism, can be learned.

If the Communist University was to ask for contributions from its students, it would at once be suppressed as “bogus”. Likewise, if it tried to issue certificates, it would be crushed.

The dual, conflicted, condition of universities, including but not limited to the ones in South Africa, has been part of their nature from their beginning. What are they for? Who do they belong to? Who do they serve? This conflict is not over, and it will not be over until the free development of each has truly become the condition for the free development of all; until the university has been universalised; and until the class struggle has been left behind. Until communism arrives, and for as long as they have to exist in class-divided society, universities will remain internally conflicted, showing two faces to the world: the face of control, and the face of freedom. The face of enlightenment, and the face of restriction.

Attached document

The attached essay, “Education and State Power”, by the late Doctor [F.T. Mikhailov](#) (1930-2006), divided into two documents for printing as booklets, was sent to the Communist University as a contribution to our course on Education.

N F S Grundtvig associated sterility with Latin studies, and advocated “Schools for Life” as an antidote. Freire denounced what he called “necrophilia” – love of death – in education, and promoted to its contrary a liberating, dialogical “pedagogy of the oppressed”. Mikhailov argues that in the old Russia of the Tsarist autocracy, bureaucratic control over the universities was dominant. There was a brief period following the Great October Revolution when, as we might say (although he does not use these words) “a hundred flowers bloomed”. But after that, and from the late 1930s, bureaucracy ruled again, he says; and this was the time when he was growing up and becoming a senior academic in the Soviet Union, in the discipline of psychology, where he played a role in the revival of studies of the work of Lev Vygotsky.

Mikhailov reports that after the enthusiasm of Perestroika, and after the subsequent “fall” of the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy re-asserted itself in exactly the same way, remaining dominant until the time of his writing (2006).

Mikhailov nevertheless reports (e.g. on pages 5 to 7 in the attached scheme of printing) that there were many centres of enquiring, true scholarship at all times in the life of the Soviet Union, running within, as well as in parallel with, “the system”.

On the other hand, and substantiating his point about the bureaucracy surviving from the Tsarist period, Mikhailov writes (p.13, under “How the past overflows into the present”):

“The most amusing thing is that in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century and very beginning of the twentieth century the clash between civil initiatives (and, consequently, of the corresponding forms civil society) and “state interests” took absolutely the same forms. The first citizens of Russia were fully aware of this. For purposes of illustration I shall cite models of the educational journalism of that time.”

And Mikhailov proceeds with some long quotations about that period. But what does he mean by “civil initiatives”? Later, under “So who governs our education today?” on page 3 of the second booklet, Mikhailov says the following:

“There is one simple and indisputable criterion of the real role that the community of scientists plays in the people’s life under the dominion of officialdom in a non-civic state. This criterion is the place of scientific people in the structure of the all-governing bureaucratic apparatus. If a place is most graciously established there for the community of scientists, then there can be no question of any innovatory self-government in the sphere of education!”

It would be difficult for any free-thinking humanist not to sympathise with Dr Mikhailov's essay, but what does he mean by a "non-civic state", or a "civic" one for that matter?

It may be that there is a persistent and stifling blanket of bureaucracy in Russia, that did reassert itself within the Soviet Union, and which was not done away with by the "savage capitalism" of the 1990s in Russia. It may be that this bureaucracy remains entrenched up to this day, and particularly in education.

In South Africa, the academy remains quite uniformly conservative, even under a Communist minister. There is little or no room there for revolutionary ideas.

Mikhailov does not define his terms "civil initiatives", or "civic state", but he leaves us to imagine these things as constitutive of some kind of utopia, not very different from the South African conception of the "National Democratic Society". The concept is without any class content, and consequently, it lacks forward mobility. Thus, in the end, Mikhailov poses the anti-humanist trend of universities as a self-initiating curse, like a disease. Whereas the state does in fact serve somebody. It serves the ruling class. The ruling class in South Africa is a capitalist class.

But, universities can be places of learning, just as much as some ministers can be communists, even in these circumstances of capitalist class rule. Whether they are so, or not, can only be seen at the historical level, i.e. in practice.

Why was the Soviet Union unable to overcome bureaucracy? Mikhailov blames Stalin, and/or what he called "the retinue that manipulated the king". This is a circular argument.

Perhaps it was having to do with the relations of production? In the Soviet Union, a job was still a job. Wages and salaries were paid as compensation for the labour power made available. The state was a capitalist. It expropriated surplus value. The dictatorship of the proletariat was not sufficient to destroy bourgeois relations of production, including the relations of production in education. The urgent, onward movement towards the withering away of the state, envisaged as a primary concern by Lenin in "The State and Revolution", was blocked. With nowhere to go, the revolution had to mark time. This was the circumstance that made bureaucracy inevitable, and not the personality of Stalin.

If, instead of Stalin, Trotsky or Bukharin had become the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the same problem was going to be there, and the result was going to be in essence, the same: bureaucracy. In the written record, it

is only Lenin who appears to have articulated this problem ([see “The State and Revolution”, 1917, Chapter 5](#)), but Lenin was already incapacitated by the early 1920s, long before he died, over 90 years ago, on January 21st, 1924.

Mikhailov too, fails to see the route of escape from bureaucracy. A “civic state”, lacking forward movement, would be as much of a haven for bureaucracy as the Soviet Union was, or even more so. This holds true in the realm of theory, and of education, as well.

The Communist University, free as it is of any financial or intellectual obligations, can be a model of new relations of production. The Communist University is not an amorphous “[crowdsource](#)”, however. It is not eclectic. The Communist University is partisan, edited and monitored. The Communist University is committed and is not class-neutral. It is not “civil society”, and it is not an NGO. The Communist University is an artefact. It is both the consequence and the occasion of collaboration between teachers and learners. But it is not neutral in the class struggle, like the late Mikhailov appears to have been. Because of what it is, and because of what it is not, the Communist University is able to hold out the prospect of forward movement towards communism, which is the classless and therefore the stateless society.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Education and State Power, Mikhailov, 2006](#).

Education, Part 6



[Jean Lave, from video lecture, Berkeley, California, March 2012](#)

Everyday Life and Learning

The big prize that is ahead of us in our studies, and which we are pursuing in this course on education, is a method that would serve to lift the entire population, as it is, to a higher and common level of revolutionary culture.

In this pursuit, we have looked, among others, at Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", N F S Grundtvig's "Schools for Life", the Cuban idea of the "Universalization of the University", and we have touched on McLaren and Fischman's treatment of Antonio Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals". We have read about "People's Education for People's Power" and we have understood Lenin when he wrote that all education is political, and that therefore *"we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics."*

Jean Lave and her correspondents (the Activity Theorists) have arrived at the same point as ourselves, by various routes. They present us with another glimpse at the prize that we seek. Simply, Jean Lave claims to have studied empirically, and then understood theoretically, some of the process by which education takes place, as it has always done, in everyday life, throughout human history and pre-history.

There are educative mechanisms in everyday life that serve to educate the people. Human life is in fact a process of teaching and learning. Humans are those who do this. Consequently, humanity creates and improves, in a progression that we call humanism.

Schooling may or may not be educative, but schooling in our class-divided circumstances leaves most of the people branded, in varying degrees, as failures and rejects, and schooling has no good answer for the unemployed and the excluded that it leaves behind.

For the first time in any of its courses, the CU now recommends a video, which is of Professor Lave giving her lecture "[Everyday Life and Learning](#)" at her home University of California, Berkeley, on 26 March 2012. The lecture itself is about 50 minutes long and in this form it is very easy to take in, and it is enjoyable.

The first of several surprises that Lave presents is that in workshops where apprentices are employed, no explicit teaching takes place. Rather, the apprentices learn from being there, and from living through the experience. The second surprise is that the technical skills learned are only a part, and are not the main part, of what is learned. The apprentices are learning how to be. Lave explains this very well.

The attached text is redacted from a lecture given by Dr Lave the previous year at the congress of ISCAR ([International Society for Cultural and Activity Research](#)), when she was summing up the congress. In some ways the two lectures are the same lecture, but the version given in the video is more accessible, while the one given to her colleagues at the ISCAR congress in Rome in 2011 is more exhaustive and more exhausting, but also more politically explicit. The lecture is published by [Mind, Culture, and Activity](#), a scholarly journal for Activity Theorists.

What can we take from this? Jean Lave's theories and those of her colleagues have all-round revolutionary potential. A starting point could be to exploit the way that these provide a place from which to criticise schooling. These theories strip away schooling's claims of unique, exclusive power in education. These theories can help restore dignity to processes that have been dismissed by the rise of schooling, or more specifically, by the rise of schooling of the capitalist kind, under capitalism.

As can be seen from the attached text file, Jean Lave is not shy to make the connection between her own critique and that of Karl Marx, citing the Third Thesis on Feuerbach in particular. Lave also calls on the assistance of Gramsci and of the Gramscian scholars of today.

This is Jean Lave's non-sexist-language version of Marx's Third Thesis on Feuerbach:

"The materialist doctrine that people are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed people are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is people who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator her/himself. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice." (Marx, 1845)

Below are more resources thrown up by the CU's researches around Jean Lave's work.

Lave lectures on video

<http://www.uctv.tv/shows/Everyday-Life-and-Learning-23201> (the "Everyday Life and Learning" lecture)

<http://vimeo.com/groups/chat/videos/28855105>

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Changing Practice, Jean Lave, 2012](#).



Hundred Flowers Campaign, China, 1956

A Different Kind of Preparation for Work

Some of the literature of the “Activity Theory” camp is about adult education, and about what they call “remediation”. This is the term for what is done to patch up in a classroom, or institutional environment, the gaps which were left in the student’s education during previous institutionalised efforts of the student, with their previous teachers.

This is an apologetic kind of way of approaching the general raising of the population’s cultural level. It takes for granted that the remedy for the failure of one institution or set of institutions is another, rather similar institution, or in other words, more of the same.

Hence we did not include Mike Rose’s article, based on US experience, called “[Rethinking Remedial Education and the Academic-Vocational Divide](#)”. But Helen Worthen’s criticism of Rose’s article is more interesting, and more to the point for our purposes than Rose’s article itself, so it is today’s attached text, with the title “A Different Kind of Preparation for Work”.

Starting from Mike Rose’s enthusiastic advocacy, Worthen works back to something like Jean Lave’s insight, arguing that it is not the skills that are used on the job, but the skill of having and improving the job that are more crucial. And these are general and social skills, and even political skills.

The heart of the matter seems to be contained in these two paragraphs of Worthen's:

'But coming to this project as someone with deep experience in the teachers union (and one that considers itself part of the broader labor movement), I could not help noticing that the majority of vocational classes were taught from the employer's point of view, not from the worker's point of view... Thus the students learned nothing about labor and employment law, workers' compensation, occupational safety and health or – especially – how to read, enforce or negotiate a contract, nothing about labor history or the history of labor struggles in their field, nothing about what union might or might not represent them. They might not even know how to read a paycheck to see if they were being paid as employees or independent contractors. They would be delivered to their first job interview as naïve about the social relations of their work as if they had just graduated from high school.

'Labor education takes as its content domain all of these social relations. Mostly sited in land-grant universities around the US, and in some places in community colleges, labor education is the "applied" side of labor studies, which is an academic sister to labor education. Labor education is usually extension education, outreach to working people and the labor movement the way agricultural extension is outreach to farmers and agribusiness. Labor education programs burgeoned during the 1940s – 1960s; in the last forty years, they have become targets of the conservative political agenda. There is no doubt that the literacy artifacts of labor education qualify as requiring advanced academic skills: reading and analyzing legal documents including court cases, labor board decisions, arbitrations; reading and writing contracts, grievances, safety complaints; doing strategic planning; administering an organization including budgeting; running elections; producing newsletters or websites; dealing with the media, just to begin the list. These are not taught as bitted-down (fragmented) skills, however, and the labor education classroom does not in any way resemble the remediation classroom. People with advanced degrees (social workers, teachers, nurses, grad students) sit next to and learn from custodians, bus drivers, clerical workers, homecare workers or construction workers. Teaching is very student-centered and strongly non-competitive. In the best classes, a community of practice is being created. Yet it would be very hard to argue that this is not "preparation for work." Nor would you be able to place a class like this on one side or the other of the "academic divide."

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [A Different Kind of Preparation for Work, Helena Worthen, 2012.](#)



From the cover of "[Piaget for Beginners](#)"

Lev Vygotsky on [Jean Piaget](#)

Jean Piaget was born in 1896, three months before Lev Vygotsky. But Piaget outlived Vygotsky by 46 years. Vygotsky died in 1934, Piaget in 1980. Piaget spent most of his life in Geneva, Switzerland, and in nearby Neuchâtel, where he was born.

Piaget was an NGO man. He was Director of a Swiss NGO called [International Bureau of Education](#) (IBE) for 40 years, from 1929 to 1969 (i.e. from age 35 to age 75), after which the IBE was incorporated into the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The IBE remained, and still remains, in Geneva.

Piaget received a doctorate in 1918, in Natural History (of molluscs), although he was later known as a Psychologist. In 1921, at the age of 25, Piaget was made the director of a small private NGO called the [Rousseau Institute](#), in Geneva.

The Rousseau Institute had been started by [Édouard Claparède](#) in 1912 "to turn educational theory into a science". Claparède had in turn been the protégé of [Théodore Flournoy](#), a spiritist.



Jean Piaget as a promising young man

The same Claparède was soon the founder of a much more ambitious NGO, with “International” in its title, helped by a grant of \$5000 from the US Rockefeller Foundation, in 1925. This was the IBE. From 1915 Claparède was Professor of Psychology at the University of Geneva in succession to Flournoy, and he held this position until his death in 1940. In 1929, Claparède promoted Piaget from the Rousseau Institute to the “International” NGO. In the same year of 1929, Piaget joined Claparède’s University of Geneva as Professor of Child Psychology.

The most prominent supporter of the IBE at its founding was [Albert Thomas](#), who had become the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at its founding, in Geneva, in 1919, remaining in that position until his death in 1932. The ILO, though ostensibly concerned with labour, was and still is constructed as a “class neutral” or possibly “class balanced” organisation, with employers in it as well as workers.



Dr Jean Piaget, Director

UNESCO's [brief historical note on the IBE](#) states:

"Since 1934, the IBE has organized the International Conference on Public Education (now the International Conference on Education) which, from 1946 onwards, was convened together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), founded in 1945.

"In 1969, the IBE became an integral part of UNESCO while retaining intellectual and functional autonomy.

"In 1999 the IBE became the UNESCO institute responsible for educational contents, methods and teaching/learning strategies through curriculum development."

At the moment in 1929 when Jean Piaget was made Director of the IBE, Thomas was still Director-General of the ILO, and Claparède was Professor of Psychology at the University of Geneva. By 1934, the promoters of the IBE had leveraged its initial origin as the private NGO project of Professor Claparède, into a *de facto* world authority, with state-level participation, led by an intellectual (Piaget) who had no equal, and hardly any critics apart from Vygotsky, from then until his death in 1980 and even up to now, 33 years later.

The Assistant Director of the IBE for the 40-year term of Piaget as Director, was Pedro Rosselló. Between 1934 and 1968 the IBE issued 65 "recommendations". According to Pedro Rosselló's historical note ([downloadable here](#)),

"It is difficult to form an opinion on the weight which these 65 recommendations may have had, their implementation having been left entirely to the governments' discretion."

This statement is intended to deceive, but instead, it reveals. This was a small lobby group with unrivalled access to international networks, and no opposition. Far from having vague misgivings about the effectiveness of its propaganda, it worked with relentless determination to create a hegemony for itself, for the pseudo-science that it pushed, and for the class that it represented. Without doubt, it succeeded. This was an NGO success story that modern NGOs (like, in South Africa, [Equal Education](#) and [Section 27](#)) can only envy. Doors were opened for them, and they swept through.



Jean Piaget, Master of the Universe, 1937

Piaget's life's work was to create an *ad hoc*, utilitarian framework upon which could be overlaid a set of arbitrary assertions, leading towards a non-political (i.e. bourgeois) system of syllabus and curriculum design that would be applied all over the globe. As the Director of the IBE, posing as an international authority, he promoted his gospel relentlessly. Piaget's influence did not arrive by the luminosity of his science, which was practically non-existent, or by the intellectual recognition of his critical peers, who, with the exception of Vygotsky, remained dumb. Piaget's influence came by means of bureaucratic manoeuvres and institutional pre-emptions. Piaget worked himself into the position of being the "default" theorist, as he remains, to a large extent, today.

The critique of Piaget is this: His volumes of literature on education were produced *ex novo* and without much reference to other branches of scientific human culture. In this respect Piaget was little different from his fellow-psychologists of the period. In the matter in which we are interested for the purposes of this course, and to which we will return, which is the periodisation of childhood development, Piaget's work hardly rises to the level of the empirical (his attempt at empiricism rests on samples which are too small, and too local) and not at all to the philosophical, or scientific.

For the "other side" to the above-described critical view, i.e. for a more appreciative take on Jean Piaget, please see the Cambridge Companion to Piaget (432 pages, 3MB PDF) downloadable from [here](#) or [here](#).

Vygotsky on Piaget

Lev Vygotsky, in the attached document, begins politely, but by his third paragraph he is beginning to thoroughly demolish Piaget. There is little or no science in Piaget, according to Vygotsky. Following on from Freud and others, Piaget treated psychology as if he had a blank sheet upon which to write anything he liked. This was not science. Says Vygotsky:

"Piaget tries to escape [from "fatal duality" between theory and data] by sticking to facts. He deliberately avoids generalizing even in his own field and is especially careful not to step over into the related realms of logic, of the theory of cognition, or of the history of philosophy. Pure empiricism seems to him the only safe ground.

"The new facts and the new method led to many problems... Problems gave birth to theories, in spite of Piaget's determination to avoid them by closely following the experimental facts and disregarding for the time being that the choice itself of experiments is determined by hypotheses. But facts are always

examined in the light of some theory and therefore cannot be disentangled from philosophy. This is especially true of facts relative to thinking. To find the key to Piaget's rich store of data we must first explore the philosophy behind his search for facts – and behind their interpretation, which he presents only at the end of his second book [Judgment and Reason in the Child] in a resumé of its contents."

Piaget furtively conceals his theoretical framework, says Vygotsky, until his summary. Vygotsky says that Piaget makes an arbitrary choice so as to base his psychology on the "pleasure principle", associated with the equally arbitrary, *ad hoc*, and non-scientific psychologist, Sigmund Freud.

Communists say that from its earliest moment, the child's consciousness is social, and that it continues to develop in a social way. Piaget makes an arbitrary presumption that this is not so. Vygotsky notes that in Piaget's work ("autism" here means self-centredness):

"...autism is seen as the original, earliest form of thought; logic appears relatively late; and egocentric thought is the genetic link between them.

"This conception, though never presented by Piaget in a coherent, systematic fashion, is the cornerstone of his whole theoretical edifice."

Piaget smuggles in the presumption that the child is fundamentally self-centred, and not social, and then he makes this assumption the foundation of all his work. Vygotsky quotes one of Piaget's arbitrary pronouncements, thus:

"The social instinct in well-defined form develops late. The first critical period in this respect occurs toward the age of 7 or 8 [Judgment and Reason in the Child, p. 276]"

In Vygotsky's part II, where Piaget's experiments are compared to his own, Vygotsky writes:

The development of thought is, to Piaget, a story of the gradual socialization of deeply intimate, personal, autistic mental states. Even social speech is represented as following, not preceding, egocentric speech.

The hypothesis we propose reverses this course... The primary function of speech, in both children and adults, is communication, social contact. The earliest speech of the child is therefore essentially social.

In his part III, Vygotsky again probes Piaget's evasiveness. He writes:

"...many issues in the complex field of child thinking border on the theory of cognition, on theoretical logic, and on other branches of philosophy. Time and again Piaget inadvertently touches upon one or another of these but with remarkable consistency checks himself and breaks off. Yet in spite of his express intention to avoid theorizing, he does not succeed in keeping his work within the bounds of pure factual science. Deliberate avoidance of philosophy is itself a philosophy, and one that may involve its proponents in many inconsistencies. An example of this is Piaget's view of the place of causal explanation in science.

"Piaget attempts to refrain from considering causes in presenting his findings... Piaget's whole approach [is] a matter of purely arbitrary choice."

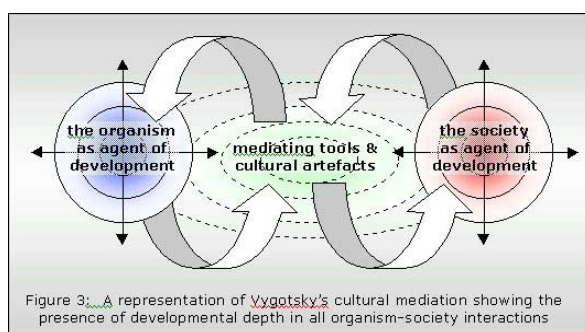
Piaget's apparent refusal of theory is a way of advancing an actual, but unsupported, theory of self-centredness, one that is consistent with bourgeois "common sense". This theory is made to appear as if it is supported by empirical observation, but Piaget's observations are of an absurdly limited sample of children, as is demonstrated in Vygotsky's concluding paragraphs.

The inertia around educational theory, and the retention of the shallow NGO lobbyist Piaget as its "default" theorist for nearly a century, in spite of his clearly evident deficiencies, is a sign of a lack of self-confidence in the ranks of the millions of educators around the world, and a sign of their being trapped under a still larger hegemony, namely that of capitalism in the age of Imperialism.

This is a situation that is ripe for revolution.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Piaget's Theory of Child Language and Thought, Vygotsky, 1932.](#)

Education, Part 7



Blunden on Vygotsky

"The whole process of becoming human is driven, from beginning to end, by the striving of the child to overcome the limitations to its self-determination and emancipate itself from imprisonment by its own drives. This drive for emancipation then proves to be the only genuinely human drive, the drive which knows no end and transcends all barriers." (p.12)

Vygotsky understands the movement from quantity to quality, and he understands the pursuit of freedom as being the source and basis of human morality. In both of these matters, we are talking about the development of the human free-willing Subject, both individual and collective.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, wrote that in the classless society, the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

A psychologist by the name of Mark Edwards, who has a blog called "[Integral World](#)", writes about Vygotsky and Piaget, as follows:

"In the end, Piaget's view of development is that of the internal maturation of individually located organising structures. As he puts it,

"Actions, whether individual or interpersonal, are in essence co-ordinated and organized by the operational structures which are spontaneously constructed in the course of mental development." (Piaget, 1962)

"... What really separates the two is that Vygotsky saw all higher development, i.e. non-biological, as mediated through cultural artefacts and through the "accumulated products of prior generations"."

This ties in with the philosophy of Andy Blunden that we have explored elsewhere, whereby all human activity can be understood as involving two or more people, mediated by an artefact, or plural artefacts. This typical unit of humanity, Blunden calls a "collaborative project". Edwards' diagram, above, illustrates this kind of always-developmental relationship.

In an e-mail, Andy Blunden has written:

"I think Piaget is the icon for the point of view that children mature, and as they become ready, teachers have to deliver the child the ideas they are able

to understand. So there is a nature-given process of maturation underlying the practice of teachers who only have to supply what the children want.

“Vygotsky turns this around. It is the interactions children have with parents and teachers, etc., which drive their intellectual development.”

Andy Blunden’s lecture “Vygotsky’s Theory of Child Development”

*(See also Andy Blunden’s definition of “neoformation” on page 7 of the text: **“Neoformation” is a new – to the child, at the time - form of social interaction**)*

Let us quote:

“So it is clear under these circumstances that it is the position of this central neoformation in the Zone of Proximal Development which is crucial if the teacher is interested in assisting the child in making a development, rather than in simply learning to do more things.

“On the other hand, during the long stable periods of development, that is precisely what the child needs. The central line of development is the maturing and consolidation of the central neoformation which characterises the whole stage of development. And during the early phase of that stage, while a child is still stabilising the neoformation of that stage, operating at the higher level is beyond the child’s imagination and reach. This only becomes possible when the central neoformation has matured.

“So during the stable periods of development, the social situation of development obliges the child to strive to master the psychological functions lying within limits imposed by her social situation of development and as a result of this striving, the central neoformation develops and leads the whole process of development.

“Vygotsky assumes that carers and teachers will be aware of those psychological functions which lie within the Zone of Proximal Development, and which Neoformations are central and which peripheral. Appropriate instruction which promotes the striving of the child and the differentiation and growth of the central neoformation will assist development, whereas efforts to interest the child in other activity, which involves peripheral lines of development or are beyond the child’s age level of ability, will not be expected to bring any benefit in development.

“During the latter stages of that stable phase of development, the child begins to be able to perceive new possibilities, and by assisting the child, the teacher or carer may

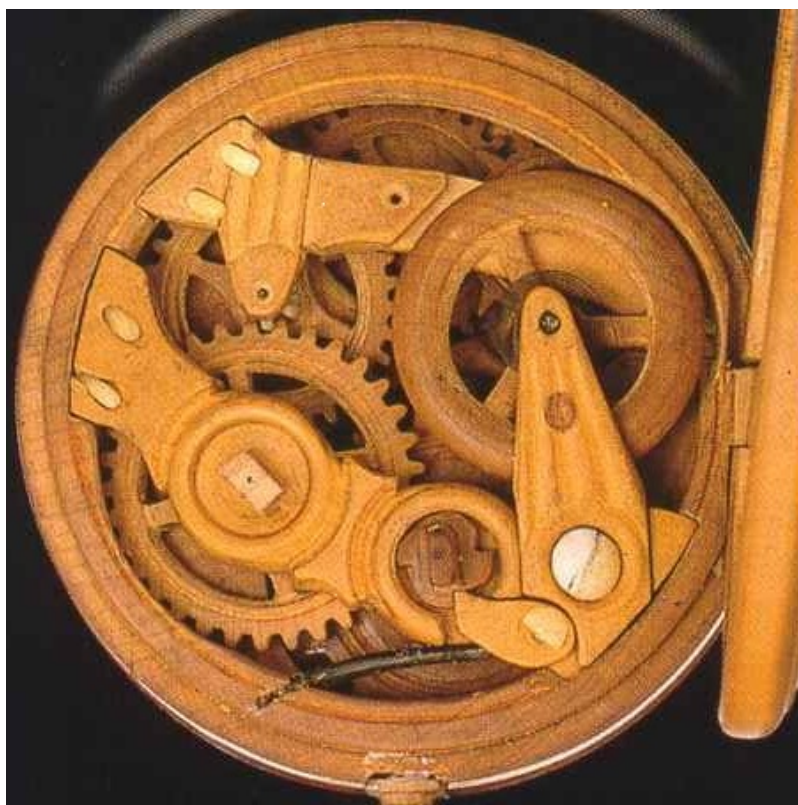
be able to see that qualitatively new functions are coming to be within the child's reach, and instruction should be directed at encouraging these new forms of activity.

"It is here that Vygotsky's concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development" is relevant. Instruction may lead development, if, and only if, instruction assists the child in promoting the differentiation of the *leading* neoformation. Vygotsky proposed that what the child can do *today with assistance* (for example by asking leading questions, offering suggestions) or *in play* (which allows the child to strive to do what they actually cannot yet do), they will be able to do *tomorrow without assistance*. The desired "flow over" to different functions resulting from success in performing the given task will occur **only if the intervention has promoted the central or leading neoformation**. Otherwise, teaching by assisting the child with a task may help them learn that task, but there will be no flow over to development."

In spite of the jargon, it is clear that Vygotsky has a theory of development. Piaget, on the other hand, assumes spontaneous development as a given. We will return to Piaget in the next item.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Vygotsky's Theory of Child Development, Blunden, 2011.](#)

Education, Part 7a



Wooden Piaget

Below are three diagrams, representing Jean Piaget's periodisation of childhood into four stages. These examples are taken from what seem to be hundreds of different versions available on the Internet (for more, [click here](#)).

The stages are clearly treated as, in Andy Blunden's words, "a nature-given process of maturation". The discrete way that Piaget names them ("Sensorimotor", "Preoperational", "Concrete Operational", and "Formal Operational"), indicates this.

Vygotsky, in contrast, marks the stages by describing the crises of transition from one to the next, and all of these are social crises. Vygotsky sees the typical features of the stages as cumulative, while it is in the critical jumps between stages that qualitative change is achieved, according to Vygotsky.

Vygotsky's periodisation is correctly called "stages of development", but Piaget does not recognise the social action of child and society. For Piaget, the stages arrive "Natural History" style, and child and society accept the changes, passively. Vygotsky is describing the active development of subjectivity and hence, development of freedom. Piaget misses this. Piaget is wooden, plodding, pedantic. In defence of his reputation against the critique of Vygotsky (see attached), Piaget is evasive.

Piaget's method is categorical. When confronted with a difficulty, he invents another category. In this way, he becomes more and more dense and elaborate, and appears more and more clever to those, and they are millions, who would rather not have a critical method, because a critical method makes demands that people do not always want to meet. What is really dull can take on an aura or mystique, and this is what has happened with Piaget.

The crude difference between Piaget and Vygotsky is that Piaget is lazier than Vygotsky. Hence it is only in Piaget's last paragraph that he gets to the crux of Vygotsky's message, where he (Piaget) says:

"I have not discussed in this commentary the question of socialization as a condition of intellectual development, although Vygotsky raises it several times."

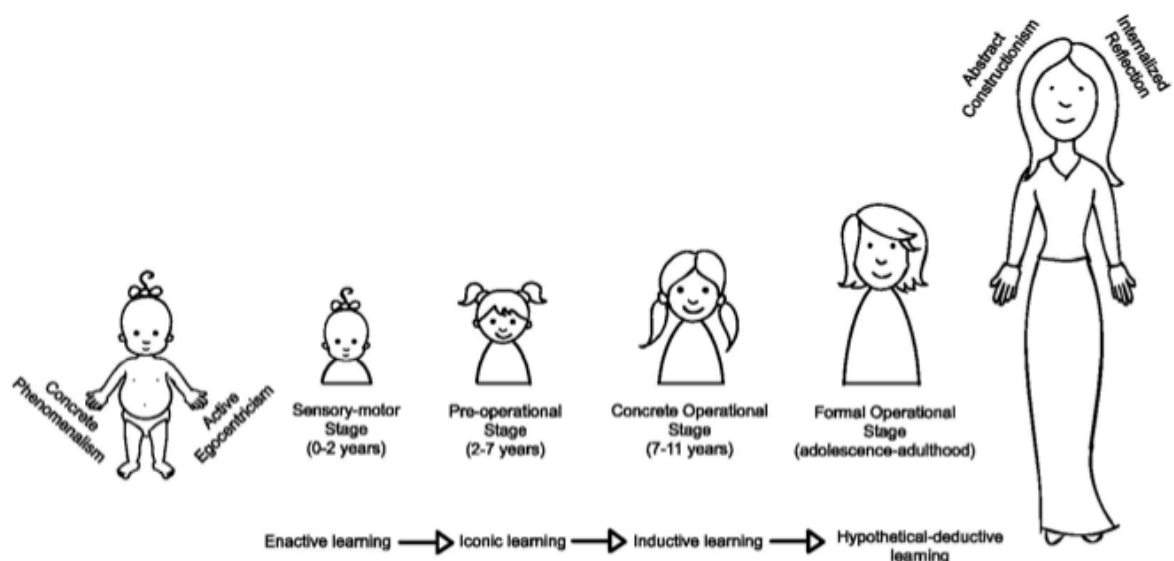
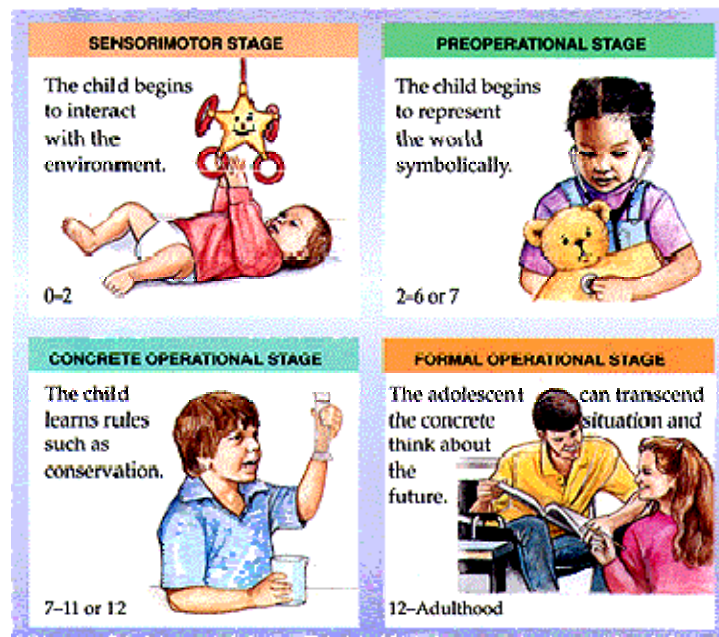
Having at last acknowledged this, Piaget hastens at once to contradict Vygotsky with a bald assertion:

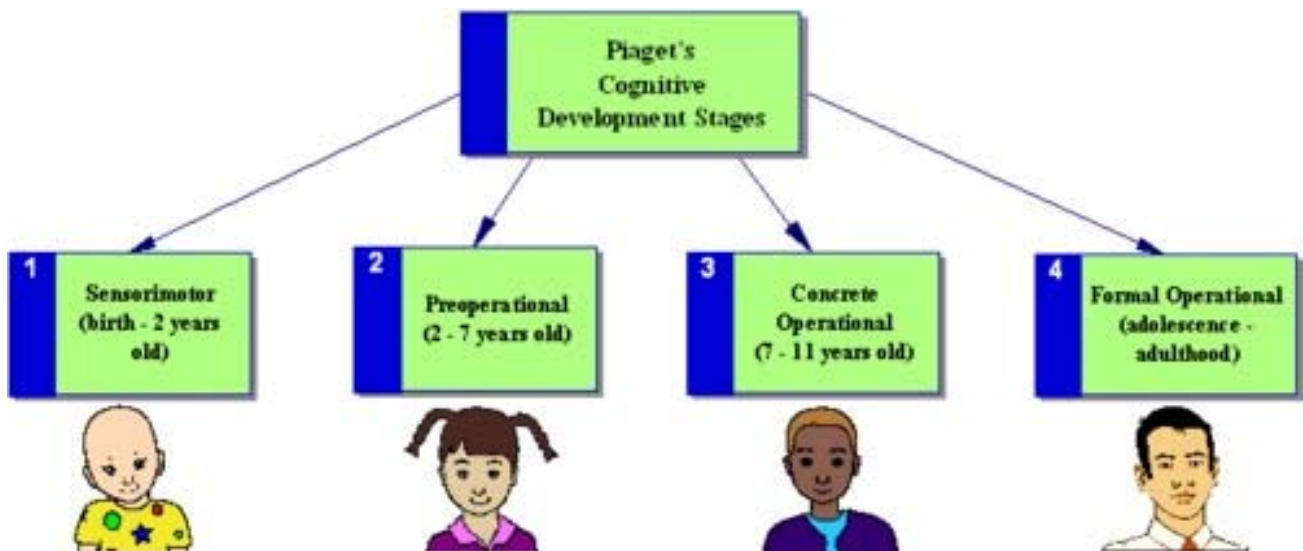
"Actions, whether individual or interpersonal, are in essence co-ordinated and organized by the operational structures which are spontaneously constructed in the course of mental development."

Spontaneously constructed?

What is spontaneous, is not constructed. What is constructed, is not spontaneous. These two terms are not compatible. This phrase, “spontaneously constructed”, demonstrates in a nutshell what Piaget’s problem is. It is that he cannot bear to contemplate the free-willing subject. Whereas for Vygotsky, learning to be free, by being free, is exactly what growing up and education are all about.

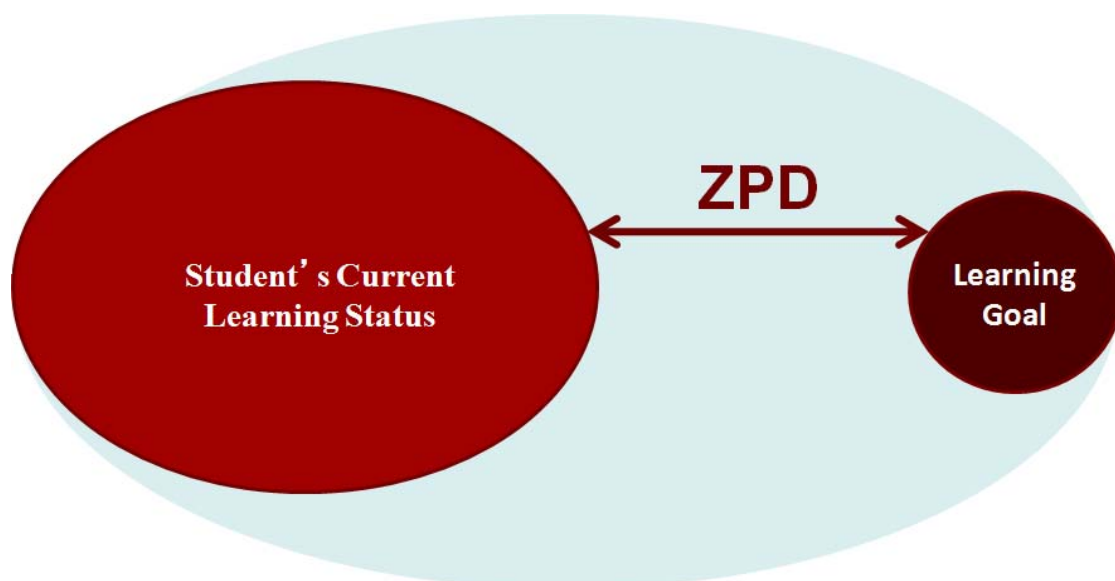
Piagetian diagrams:





- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Comments on Vygotsky's critical remarks, Piaget, 1962.](#)

Education, Part 7b



ZPD ("Zone of Proximal Development") Diagram from "Afl" programme material

A Misunderstanding

To conclude this part we will show how different and even opposite interpretations of learning theories can arise. We will try to show that the theory of Vygotsky, famous as it now is, can be followed in name, even while other, and even contrary, theories are being advanced.

Our text (attached) consists of excerpts from Module 1 of the Assessment for Learning (Afl) programme, which was, in 2013, in its second year. The programme is run by the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) via its Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute. It was developed by staff of the Tshwane University of Technology.

This programme is admirable in many ways, and it is successful. It also marks a clear advance for SADTU into the overall leadership of education, above and beyond its role as a trade union and as a professional association, as previously conceived. With the Afl programme, SADTU is moving confidently on to ground that it did not fully occupy before, and it is doing so at a crucial moment in South Africa's history.

Quantity and Quality

However, in this course of ours (now coming to the conclusion of its 7th part out of ten weekly parts) we are focussed on certain matters, which we have hitherto illustrated by comparing the ideas of Lev Vygotsky and those of Jean Piaget. The Afl document we are quoting has a section headed "Theories of Learning". It sets out the rational basis for the further proceedings of its course. It does not mention Piaget. It does rely quite heavily on Vygotsky, but in a strangely misunderstood fashion.

This misunderstanding reveals a particular difficulty in education.

Vygotsky was concerned to discover how children can, and do, successfully develop into mature adult members of society, which in his case was a dynamic, optimistic, revolutionary society – the Soviet Union, in its early years.

Vygotsky distinguished between qualitative development and quantitative learning. Like all communists, his presumption was that qualitative, substantive change of nature is always the product of revolutionary crisis, whereas quantitative change is marginal, incremental, gradual and cumulative.

There is a relationship between the two kinds of change. In any given case, quantitative change will bring matters to the point where qualitative change is possible, and therefore, at once, inevitable. This understanding of gradual, quantitative change, leading to precipitate, revolutionary change, is one of the "tools of analysis" of Marxist practice.

Vygotsky studied the crises of childhood and adolescence, and found much more in them than trouble. He found that this is where the most important gains are made. This is where "development" happens, and where development means something different and greater than learning.

Learning knowledge, of itself, does not cause a child to “grow up”. Accumulated knowledge only causes the child to complete tasks which, being complete, present the child with what Vygotsky calls a “predicament”. This means that the child cannot go on living in its old way, but must make a risky, frightening jump into a new way of living and being (“neoformation”).

Now see how our Afl document describes Vygotsky’s ideas:

“Vygotsky argues that it is within the ZPD that all learning takes places. The implications of Vygotsky's theories for teachers is noted by Allrich (n.d.) who notes that as learning proceeds, a portion of the Proximal Zone becomes part of the Present Knowledge, and as a consequence, a smaller Proximal Zone remains.”

This is a misunderstanding. Vygotsky actually says that most learning takes place between crises. The kind of learning that takes place between crises is measurable, because it is by nature quantitative.

The much more important qualitative kind of change requires a special kind of attention. It is not like “all learning”. Vygotsky calls it “neoformation”, and he says that when such a transition is approaching, it is not helpful to expend a lot of energy on other things.

Let us now look at what Andy Blunden wrote in an e-mail to the CU:

“The problem is that zoped [“Zone of Proximal Development”] was not a big concept for Vygotsky or his following, but when the theory got to the US (which as it happens is where Vygotsky got the concept in the first place) it really took hold. So in American renditions of Vygotsky's ideas, ZPD is transformed into the key concept. But like I said in my speech on Child Development, who would try to teach kids things they either couldn't do even when you helped them, or something they could do already without help?

“The point is to be aware of that obvious fact, and not wait until development happens somehow unaided, and the teacher can say "Oh Johnny can now add up so let's teach him addition." (which is what Piaget tends to tell us.) The tricky bit, which is what Vygotsky was concerned with, is to know just which activity learning will bring in its wake a qualitative development - when a penny's worth of learning turns into a pound's worth of development. It is also a good idea to keep in mind when you are teaching a group (as you always are) and the kids are helping each other.”

The above should be sufficient to defend Vygotsky's ideas, and to show that it is not all right to exchange, as in the diagram shown at the top (and again in the attached document), the word "development" for "learning goals", or vice versa, and still attribute the idea to Vygotsky.

Learning goals are nominated by teachers or perhaps by the Department of Basic Education. Development, on the other hand, is a matter of necessity. The necessity is primarily social, and is bound up with biology and with aging. Development is not about facts and information.

In terms of the Afl, not much harm is done by this misunderstanding. The brief setting-out of the theoretical stall, even if it falsifies Vygotsky, serves the good purpose of preparing the ground for a necessary and beneficial discussion of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria. These are undoubtedly vital pedagogical tools, and crucial to the assessment of learning, which is a good thing.

But the document fails to understand Vygotsky, and it therefore leaves unfinished business that is arguably even more important than the kind of learning that is being assessed and measured. This unfinished business is the growing-up of children into society as mature adults.

There is an assumption that those who get jobs, will be all right. And there is a second assumption, that if the children are well prepared they will all get jobs. Whereas there is nothing in history, or in logic, that makes either of these propositions to be any more than very unsafe assumptions.

What can teachers do about that? Vygotsky suggests that teachers should first keep their eyes on another prize, which is development of the personality within society.

Vygotsky's is a revolutionary suggestion. When teachers are ready for it, they will have to take it up. To paraphrase Vygotsky, this is a neoformation waiting to happen.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [First Module of Assessment for Learning, SADTU, 2012, Excerpts.](#)**
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Progress and Conflict

The writing of this Communist University course on Education was planned for years. Actual preparation took more than a year. It was rolled out for the first time in early 2013. Naturally, the struggle in education has continued. In the first iteration, there was reference to current conflicts within education at the time. The course would not be able to trace every topical event. But there will need to be some sort of update or editing of the topical material.

Up to this point, we have managed to tackle the main theoretical load that the course must carry, and continue to carry, in its successive annual re-presentations on one of the four CU channels.

We have looked at theories of mass public education such as N F S Grundtvig's "Schools for Life", an idea that survives in the form of the Danish folk-high-school movement; Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; and the Cuban "Universalisation of the University". We have seen, through Lenin's eyes, that all education is political. We have seen how the political conflict plays out in the realm of conventional theories of formal education, and through Jean Lave's eyes, we have seen the relevance of Marx's Third Thesis on Feuerbach, among others. We have understood, through Mike Cole's, Andy Blunden's and Lev Vygotsky's eyes, that the conceptual separation of schooling from life is a mistake, and that the development of people is one historic and revolutionary process.

As with previous Communist University courses, the last parts of the course on Education have been reserved for the more current "problematic" facing South Africa, in the light of the theoretical review that is comprised in the earlier parts. Not for the first time in the CU courses, we found last year that life had conspired to dramatise the matters under review, and that a real-life crisis presented itself at the same moment as we arrived at consideration of the potential for conflict.

On the 5th of March 2013, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) called for Minister of Education Motshekga's resignation, and announced its intention *"to mobilize all our members for an indefinite strike as a response to the assault on collective bargaining, our basic right as workers and to promote quality public education."*

On International Women's Day (8th March 2013), at a special event in Katilehong, Ekurhuleni, SADTU launched a Campaign for Quality Public Education. This was a potentially revolutionary move by the organised educators in SADTU to redefine education qualitatively, so that it can respond to South Africa's historical need for popular development, as opposed to the narrow school curriculum dictated by the bourgeois imperialist hegemony that has still not released its long-term grip on South Africa's educational system.

In the latter respects, SADTU's intentions are in keeping with the ANC's January 8th Statement of 2013 (attached), which in turn reflects the transactions of the 53rd ANC National Conference that took place the previous month, in Mangaung. The January 8th Statement calls for major, integrated, educational initiatives. It also declared the Decade of the Cadre, and declared 2013 to be the year of unity-in-action towards socio-economic freedom.

Among the initiatives mentioned in the 2013 ANC January 8th Statement were these:

- Internal education of ANC members, politically, generally and academically
- Literacy and general education of the community led by the ANC at local level
- Assistance by ANC-led volunteers to the formal-education schools in the localities.
- Expansion of access to education, including to Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges
- Commitment to the development of indigenous languages and to their use in schools

If it had proceeded nicely, the ANC's programme was capable of growing into the kind of co-ordinated raising of political and general culture of the nation that we would want to see in the light of the first seven parts of this course on Education. But instead, within days, there was conflict between the Minister of Basic Education and the organised educators. There was a massive one-day protest against the Ministers' threats, in April, in Pretoria, organised by SADTU. This checked the Minister but it did not finish the conflict. SADTU called for the resignation of the Minister, and of the Director-General.

An SACP 2013 statement came out plainly in favour of education for liberation: People's Education for People's Power! SADTU took up the banner of Quality Public Education, showing willingness to lead, in a revolutionary way, in this field.

We will, this time, continue to use the same 2013 documents that were previously used in this part, but we will add the extensive section on education from the ANC's 2014 national and provincial election manifesto, as a separate 4-page leaflet. We will attach, and make available by download, the following documents:

- ANC January 8th 2013 Statement
- A Compilation of SACP, SADTU and ANC statements from February and March 2013
- Extracts on Education from the 2014 ANC National and Provincial Election Manifesto

The next item within this part of the course looks at several visions of how the development of education can be managed for “quality”, in the bourgeois sense, derived from the trading of commodities, of semi-static standards or grades; and also qualitatively, in the revolutionary sense of qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, change.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [ANC January 8th Statement, 2013](#), [Compilation of SACP, SADTU and ANC statements, February-March 2013](#), and [Extracts on Education from the 2014 ANC National and Provincial Election Manifesto](#).

Education, Part 8a



Good Intentions

The South African Council for Education ([SACE](#)), which is a registration council, has as a slogan “Towards Excellence in Education”.

Excelling what?

The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC; see attached) has the slogan “Ensuring Quality Learning and Teaching for All”.

What quality is it talking about?

Do any of the stakeholders (Departmental Official, Teachers, Learners, Parents and Community) think that “quality” means anything more than “good”, or “nice”?

The intentions are good. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Seven years after the QLTC was signed, the teachers are still being victimised. The obligations of the other four named stakeholder groups are practically forgotten.

Yet it was the teachers, and the SADTU teachers in particular, who “came to the party” with “Assessment for Learning” and other programmes under the auspices of the Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute, created by themselves. The teachers acted with an intention to make the QLTC a reality.

SADTU’s 2030 Vision statement, passed two years later in 2010 (attached) commits to (among the many other points), *“creating, through our classroom commitments, a nation that learns and advances its civilisation.”*

It goes on to say:

“The 2030 Vision represents a turning point in the history of SADTU and the pursuit of NDR objectives within the teacher community.

“The Vision is based on the view that we need to build a new teacher for an emerging South African society, rather than simply normalise something which was never normal.”

SADTU has taken repeated initiatives. SADTU’s Quality Public Education Campaign was launched on 8 March 2013.

It may be that, far from needing “non-negotiability”, South Africa needs a negotiation – a dialogue – about the quality of education; that is to say, about the nature of education, and what it is for.

Merely declaring “non-negotiability” does not convert what is quantitatively relative, into something qualitatively absolute. Such a declaration only reveals a desire for firmness, while it displays a lack of firmness, a lack of concreteness, and equivocation between multiple bullet-points.

This course, so far, has explored what education might be, in its largest conception. We have found that the process of education is inseparable from politics, inseparable from liberation, and inseparable from a struggle for People’s Power.

The purpose of education is to change the world, and not to reproduce the *status quo*. SADTU recognises this.

Qualitative education will recognise, as Lev Vygotsky recognised, that it is qualitative crises that mark the education of a child in its development towards becoming an adult. It will recognise that these intense but necessary crises cannot be adequately comprehended quantitatively (i.e. by numbers).

Qualitative education will recognise that the social life of adults, as a community, must also pass through similar, but new, qualitative, revolutionary changes, and that the preparation of children for life must therefore also be, quite openly and explicitly, the preparation of children as revolutionaries.

No other kind of education will do, for South Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [QLTC Non-Negotiables, 2008](#); [The South African Democratic Teachers Union's 2030 Vision, 2010](#).

Education, Part 9



Language, Politics and Education

“The ANC is committed to the development of indigenous languages. We call on our government to prepare for the introduction of the teaching of our indigenous languages by 2014.”

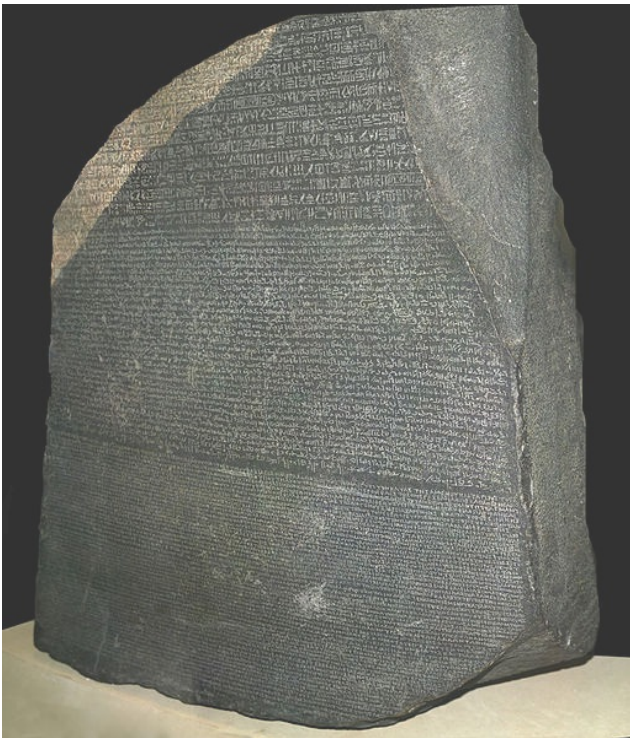
ANC January 8th Statement, 2013

South Africa has 11 official languages, and these 11 are not the only languages spoken, read and written, in our country.

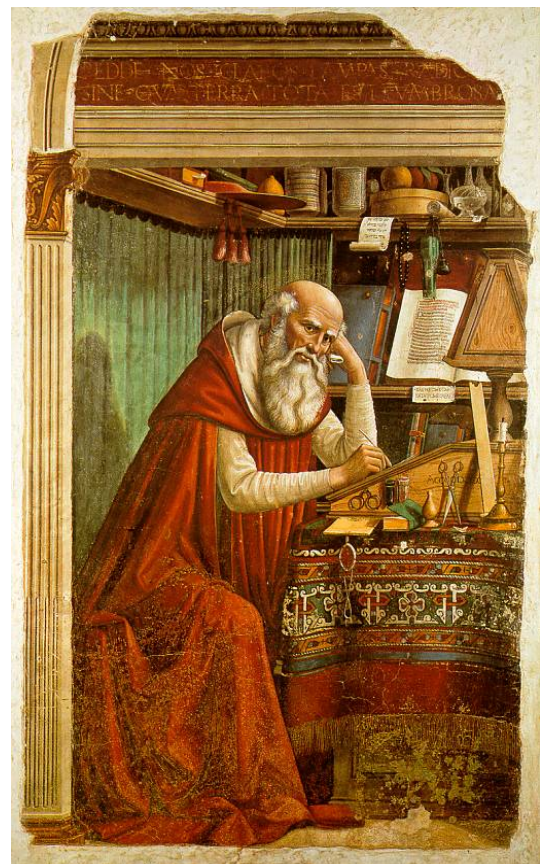
The latest South African legislation having to do with languages is the [Use of Official Languages Act, 2012](#), gazetted on 1 October 2012.

South Africa has a [Pan South African Languages Board](#), and there is a separate institution known as [Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign](#), whose several objectives include the teaching of mother-tongue literacy, basic numeracy, and oral English to [“adults who missed out on their schooling”](#).

The Communist University has its own language policy. It is that participants may use any language of their choice. It is not the responsibility of the speaker or the writer to translate his or her output.



[The Rosetta Stone](#)



[St Jerome, translator of the Bible into Latin](#)

Dictionaries

This will involve the development of dictionaries in all of the official languages that do not have them, which are all nine of the African official languages (isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, seSotho sa Lebowa, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga) of South Africa. Such a project could be assisted by the use of [Wiktionary](#), a collaborative project for the development of language dictionaries (not translation dictionaries). An example is the “[Wikamusi ya Kiswahili](#)”, which contains 13,780 Kiswahili words, defined in Kiswahili. Every language needs a dictionary in the language itself. Every language needs a literature, composed and published in the language. Every language needs production of new literature in the language.

Language in School

The institution of 11 “official” languages in South Africa, sanctified by the Constitution, is as far as we know based on “human rights” precepts. Consequently, because human rights are passive, what has been done so far has not been very effective in terms of bringing the languages to life.

The teaching of children in the mother-tongue that they have from home when they enter school for the first time may be a human right. But if so, then it is not yet being well observed in South Africa. Motivation for change in this regard comes not from “human rights” but from the relatively poor rate of success in attempting to educate people in languages (English or Afrikaans) that they did not learn in the home and therefore do not, in the beginning of their schooling, know.

Imposing on young children the stress of attempting, at a very young age, to learn in language that they do not understand and have not yet been taught, is a cruelty and of course, it is not successful. On average, children who are presented with this hurdle, do not advance as fast as children who are welcomed into the formal education system in their own language.

Broader Political Considerations in relation to language

Politics, from the communist point of view, is the development of people, this being a social process that to happen properly, must involve all. The National Democratic Revolution, to succeed and to complete its historic project, must organise the entire country into a communication, and a constant dialogue.

To do so by imposing, whether by design or by default, one single language, is something we as the SACP do not support, no matter what may have been thought in the past about nations needing to have a single, common language.

Translation

It follows that the matter of translation must be approached with care. It will not do to have the two former colonial languages, or more likely only one of them (English), being used as the bridge for translation between the speakers of indigenous languages. Such a situation will carry too much of a danger that the English language, which is enormously larger in vocabulary and literature than the South African indigenous languages are, will cease from being a medium of interior national human development, and will instead become a dominant external source.

The problem of translation is one of serving a culture that is expressed in multiple languages. This is a different project from the colonial translation project, which had the aim of dominating the indigenous language-systems, taking ownership of them, and making a bridge by which all of the mother-tongue intellectuals could enter and dwell within the realm of the colonial *lingua franca*.

This distinction has to be asserted politically. Once accepted, it has technological implications which also have to be asserted. If not, then the gains won politically will be smuggled away in the technological execution.

Priority has to be given to the creation of new indigenous-language literature, including a first dictionary, in each language.

Update

Since this item was composed and first published in early 2013, the CU has created [a full course on languages](#).

This introduction has been re-edited, and a text has been found that will serve to codify the questions of language in relation to education. The new text is an article (attached) by Khethiwe Marais, who is a linguist, translator and language expert, currently at UNISA. Her article covers what is interesting to us about language when it comes to education, and the bind that we are in, that causes us to make a disadvantage out of a potential multilingual advantage. Marais points out that the dominance of English, with the advantages that it promises (but does not necessarily fulfil), makes parents into a conservative lobby within the education system.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Multilingualism and Democracy, Khethiwe Marais, 2014](#)



SACP on Education

The attached document contains extracts from the South Africa Road to Socialism (“SARS”), adopted at the 13th National Congress held in Ongoye, KZN, in July, 2012.

SARS says, among other things:

“Education is a major terrain for the battle of ideas. It can be used to empower the working class and popular strata, but it can [be] and typically is used to perpetuate the ideologies of oppressive ruling classes.

“... The SACP must wage a struggle for curriculum transformation aimed at empowering the working class and the majority of our people to play a meaningful role in the transformation of society.

“... In waging the struggle for access to education it is important that that struggle is coupled with the struggle for the teaching of progressive ideas throughout our education system.”

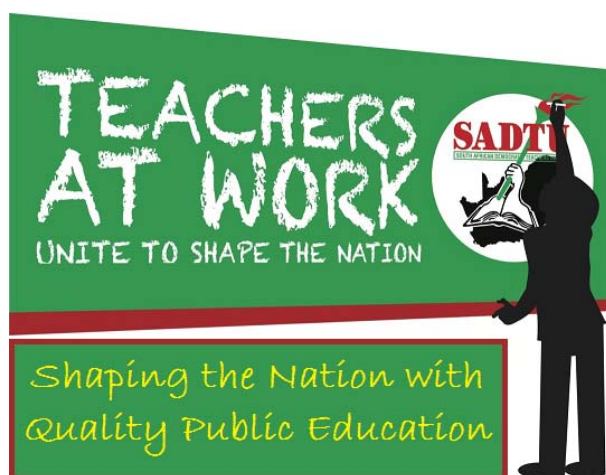
The document also includes an extract from a media release of the SACP in February, 2013 during a public controversy started by the government over the naming of teaching as an “essential service”, a term which has implications for teachers’ rights in labour law.

In the course of that quotation the SACP comes out clearly in favour of education for liberation, and for People’s Education for People’s Power.

The SACP is therefore on record as being ready for a struggle over the nature of education in our society.

In addition, in the document, there are words describing the intended Political Education regime inside the SACP.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [SACP, SARS on Education and on Political Education, 2012](#).**



SADTU's Quality Public Education Campaign

SADTU launched a Promotion of Quality Public Education Campaign.

Says SADTU's 2013 Human Rights Day (Sharpeville Day) Statement (attached):

"The national leadership of SADTU will soon embark on a nationwide information drive and the idea is to inform members, parents and communities about the initiative.

"The decision to come up with such a campaign is in line with SADTU's 2030 Vision's strategic pillar of Creating a Learning Nation."

This is the tenth part of the Education course and the last item before we move to a new course on this platform, which will be the CU course on "Development".

Any material that can illustrate SADTU's idea of quality in education, or the general idea of "quality education" (the meaning of which is usually taken for granted) should be admissible here.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [SADTU out to unite Teachers, Parents, Learners and Communities.](#)

Course: Education

23003, Education, Introductions, Booklet 2 of 2

11930 words